

Cases of "no identified risk" represent persons who have not reported a mode of exposure to HIV. Health departments routinely investigate cases with no identified risk and reclassify them when possible. Cases appearing in this report without identified risk include cases under investigation by the TDH, persons for whom no follow-up is possible, either due to death or because they declined interview or cannot be located, and persons for whom no mode of exposure to HIV has been ascertained. Priority is given to reclassifying AIDS cases with no identified risk; HIV follow-up is conducted as time and resources permit. Often, cases of HIV infection are reported before follow-up interviews can be conducted. Persons interviewed very close to initial diagnosis of HIV-infection may not know or report risk information. For these reasons, the proportion of HIV-infected persons without identified risk is substantially higher than that of persons diagnosed with AIDS, nationwide and in Tennessee (See Section 3.0).

The exposure category "men who have sex with men" (MSM) includes men who report sexual contact with other men. These men may or may not self-identify as homosexual. This category also includes men who report sexual contact with both men and women. This category does not include men who report having sex with other men and injecting drug use. As noted, they appear under a separate exposure category.

Some persons classified as having acquired HIV infection through heterosexual contact may have other unreported risk factors. However, the number of AIDS cases attributed to heterosexual contact is believed to be a conservative estimate.²³ In order for an individual to be classified as having contracted HIV infection through heterosexual contact, they must have reported sexual contact with a person who has HIV or AIDS or who is at risk for HIV infection. Some HIV-infected individuals may not be aware of their partner or partner's behaviors; others may not report them.

Persons with no identified risk for HIV infection are listed under the category, "no identified risk". It is believed that when follow-up investigations have been completed for persons with no identified risk, many females in particular will be reclassified as having heterosexual risk. For example, by December 1993, 42% of persons nationwide with AIDS and no identified risk had been reclassified. Of these, 10% of males and 63% of females were reclassified as having been at heterosexual risk for HIV. Furthermore, many persons who reported risks higher in the hierarchy of risk factors--injecting drug use is a prime example--also reported heterosexual contact with a person at risk, but will not appear under this category²⁴.

2.5.2. Trends in Exposure to HIV/AIDS

The majority of adult and adolescent AIDS cases in Tennessee are attributed to men having sex with men (MSM). For each year between 1983 and 1995, MSM

²³ CDC. "Heterosexually Acquired AIDS--United States, 1993". *MMWR*. 1994; 43,9:159.

²⁴ Ibid.